



## *Lessons Learned Summary*

## **UN PEACEKEEPING OBSERVER<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. Background.** Chapter 6, Peacekeeping Missions for the UN Observer Forces delineate the requirements for observing and reporting violations of the peace agreement.

#### **B. Key Results, Consequences, and Insights**

1. The nature of this duty usually entails a major adjustment for the Marines, as they generally tend to be proactive in mission duties. Accordingly, for the Marines, acclimation to observing and reporting duty is difficult given its restrictive nature.
2. The UN Mission will conduct a training course to stress the required procedures.
3. Assignment of the Marines to UN peacekeeping positions is somewhat of a temporary duty billet. They receive their usual pay and allowances plus a monthly UN stipend. Depending on the post requirement, the rank of the officer assigned ranges from captain to colonel.

### **II. DISCUSSION**

**A. Key Points of Cultural Intelligence.** Observers are advised to learn something of the customs and language of the country to which they are being posted prior to reporting as they will be “living off the land.”

#### **B. Assessment**

1. Map reading skills are essential. The Marine Corps generally chooses only officers with extensive field experience for this duty which provides, among numerous other advantages, an officer well experienced in map reading. Additionally, however, having a personal commercial Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver is recommended. It can be an invaluable asset for land navigation, particularly in desert terrain.
2. Marine officers should familiarize themselves with the vehicles and aircraft used by the military forces involved in the peace agreement.
3. Marines in receipt of orders to peacekeeping missions should endeavor to attend anti-terrorist awareness and driving courses.

### **C. Command and Control**

1. The UN command and control system is far different from that of the US Armed Forces. Prospective observers should familiarize themselves with the military and civilian aspects of the UN command and control system.

2. Peacekeeping tasks require a very rigid and procedural protocol due to the need for maintaining a status of absolute impartiality, which is critical to the success of the mission.

### **D. Coalition Management**

1. Not all UN agencies work for the Secretary General. UN humanitarian and relief organizations work under the UN banner, but are often totally independent entities with charters different from the peacekeeping effort.

2. In the field, relations with humanitarian and relief organization personnel should be polite, but formal. This is very important so as not to compromise, or give the appearance of compromising the UN impartiality requirement of the mission.

### **E. Logistics**

1. UN Observers are expected to subsist off the economy. Observers receive a healthy allowance that permits them to bring in canned and dry goods not available in the host nation. This includes insecticides. Every advantage should be taken of this allowance.

2. Observers are expected to cook for themselves when on outpost. Accordingly, Marines who do not know how to cook should learn to do so.

3. As a standing rule, the UN observer assignment is designated as an unaccompanied billet, with no allowance for family members. However, most missions allow families to come if the host nation does not object.

**III. LESSONS LEARNED/FOOT STOOMPER.** The perception of impartiality is critical to the success of the UN Chapter 6 Peacekeeping missions. In such missions, the potential belligerents (parties to the conflict) have agreed to be kept apart by a confidence-building mechanism (you). Your perceived impartiality is absolutely critical.

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<sup>1</sup> The source material for this document was originated in a staff paper, May 1999, authored by Colonel Gary Anderson, Chief of Staff, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory.